

## Formal and Informal Reviews

The growth of BTSA *draws attention to issues of program quality*. In a small program in which participants develop procedures and approaches together, quality is assured by sharing understandings of the purposes of the program and the conceptual base on which it has been developed. The program directors, cluster consultants, and Task Force members who have had roles in BTSA from the start were involved in developing the set of documents and activities on which the induction program rests. Consequently, many held views in common about the role of assessment in support, "best practices" related to selecting, training, and matching SPs, and other important matters. However, as longstanding programs grow, some have been hesitant to take advantage of the increasingly sophisticated understanding of what is required for induction support and have held on to inappropriate practices. New programs require opportunities to judge their activities against state standards. *As a result, BTSA as a system has begun to formalize quality assurance through formal and informal program reviews.*

Both types of reviews are based on the induction program standards. In the past, there were 13 standards for induction programs, but the new revision has 20, with the increase related to the new role of induction programs in teacher credentialing. The program reviews discussed here, however, were based on the 13 standards.

The formal program reviews are quite structured, *with a review team of fellow BTSA program directors, CCs, PDCs, and Task Force members assessing the program against the 13 standards*. Program directors collect evidence around each of the standards, and the team judges whether the standards have been met. Although directors describe the formal review as "arduous," they also reported that it was useful: *It caused us to have to think about the program...I don't think we had thought seriously across all 13 standards...Having only a year to prepare, and this may sound ridiculous, but having only a year to prepare was really difficult. And we never had the time to assure our BTs especially, but also our SPs and our districts, that they needed to be truthful, that the money was not going to go away.... We're still using our formal program review. We used it to frame the questions on the evaluation that we did on the program this year. We used it to implement initial needs assessments of BTs. It wasn't part of our program. Boom! It came through. We used it to change a little bit of the structure of how we collect information and how we collect paperwork at our meetings, and not at our meetings. What they said we really tried hard to implement, and I think it made a difference this year.* (Program Director)

Another program director was less enthusiastic, saying it was "rather intimidating and too heavy duty for this program." Nonetheless, those programs that met the standards were very pleased, and the programs in the case studies that did not meet particular standards addressed those over the next year. CCs work with programs to address the unmet standards, occasionally drawing upon the Task Force liaison to underscore the importance of remedying any problems.

*Informal reviews are held in years in which a program does not participate in the formal review. The informal reviews pair two programs, which develop evidence around the 13 standards, similarly to the formal review but less rigorously. The informal reviews focus on standards that a formal review has shown to need improvement, or on standards selected by the program. The success of the informal review rests largely on whether the reviewing project understands the program and has prepared for the informal review. One program director gave examples of two informal reviews in which she had participated. In one, the review group had prepared for the review and "the information we got from that, although it was informal, was so great." In the other, however, "The informal review was not as useful to use, mostly because I don't think the review team that came to us was as well prepared as they should have been." The program director who was critical of the formal program review praised the informal review because it led to "lots of learning. We had honest conversations around the standards. Getting an outside perspective was good."*

A Task Force member noted that formal program reviews were difficult for BTSA participants because the focus of BTSA is support, and formal program reviews carry images of accountability. Nonetheless, throughout the BTSA community, there is a recognition that a statewide program such as *BTSA requires assurance of quality so it remains viable.*